

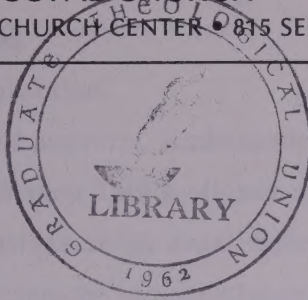
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UN ENVOY PRAISES CHURCH TUTU RESPONSE

NEW YORK -- The chairman of the United Nations Special Committee against Apartheid publically commended Episcopal Church leaders for their response to the South Africa government's action in lifting the passport of Anglican Bishop Desmond Tutu.

In a meeting of the committee May 8, Ambassador B. Akporode Clark of Nigeria noted that the UN had received 22 letters and telegrams from Episcopal bishops on the issue, expressed his great appreciation for the support and told the committee that he would communicate with the Secretary General the committee's hope that he would intercede to get the restriction lifted.

Ambassador Clark placed the names of the bishops and many of their comments in the record of the formal meeting.

The response came after Presiding Bishop John M. Allin had asked bishops of the Church to join the protest voiced by all Anglican primates and leaders of other churches to the action of South Africa. Episcopal bishops were asked to convey their concern to U.S. officials, the South African government or the United Nations.

In his own comments, Bishop Allin spoke of his "great sorrow, regret and indignation" over the action.

Bishop Allin told Prime Minister P. W. Botha of South Africa, "This action appears to be at variance with your expressed desire for peace and reconciliation among all in your land. The people of the Episcopal Church join me in requesting your government to reconsider this move against one whom we know as a colleague and friend, and to cease such actions in the future against other courageous Christian leaders who are committed to justice and dignity for all."

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He was joined in his concern by Dr. Charles R. Lawrence, president of the House of Deputies of the General Convention.

Responding to the show of concern, Ambassador Clark reiterated his own support for Bishop Tutu and added: "Bishop Tutu's offence was, of course, to give voice to the deepfelt grievances and aspirations of the great majority of the people of South Africa. He has done that with clarity and courage in accordance with the dictates of his conscience and his vocation as a leader of the Church and of his people."

Those bishops who communicated with the United Nations were: Edward W. Jones of Indianapolis, Pui-Yeung Cheung of Taiwan, Bernardo Merino of Colombia, Edmond L. Browning of Hawaii, William E. Sanders of Tennessee, William A. Jones of Missouri, Charles E. Bennison of Western Michigan, Philip A. Smith of New Hampshire, Morris F. Arnold, Suffragan of Massachusetts, Otis Charles of Utah, William E. Swing of California, George M. Murray of Central Gulf Coast, Donald J. Davis of Erie, A. Heath Light of Southwestern Virginia, Harold B. Robinson of Western New York, Coleman McGehee of Michigan, Paul Moore of New York, Robert P. Atkinson of West Virginia, E. Paul Haynes of Southwest Florida, Leigh A. Wallace of Spokane, George W. Barrett, retired bishop of Rochester and Robert L. DeWitt, resigned bishop of Pennsylvania.

These are some of the comments the bishops made.

Bishop Moore: "Shocked by removal of passport from the Right Reverend Desmond Tutu an outstanding world leader of the Anglican Communion. Such an action deeply shocks not only the Christian community in the United States but all people of good will and undermines the protestations of the Government of South Africa that it is moving in the direction of tolerance and democracy."

Bishop Bennison: "I write in support of Bishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa, whose passport was withdrawn last month by the South African government. Bishop Tutu is a courageous Christian living in a very depressed area of the world. His support of the Rev. David Russell was the reason for his passport being withdrawn. Both clergymen were rightly expressing their views with regard to the oppressive policies of apartheid in that troubled land.

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"I write from personal experience, having made a visit to our companion dioceses of Kimberly and Kuruman in 1964. There, we came into direct contact with the problems created by apartheid.

"Bishop Tutu, by his protest over the prison sentence imposed on the Rev. David Russell for violating the terms of his banning order which had been issued because of his views and practices on apartheid, was voicing the sentiments of all reasonable Christians. I sincerely hope that every effort can be made to restore his passport and that the South African government be made fully aware of our protest. Only so, can the evils of apartheid be realized by this government and the matter truly dealt with by them."

Bishop Browning: "Bishop Tutu is an outstanding Anglican leader and one that is considered throughout all of Christendom to be a person of great integrity. This action taken against him by the African Government is in violation of everything that is holy and right about God's creation."

Bishop Sanders: "This is to express my personal indignation over the action of the South African government in depriving Bishop Desmond Tutu of his passport. He is a beloved and highly respected Bishop of the Anglican Communion and of the world-wide ecumenical church. At the 1978 meeting of the Anglican Bishops at the Lambeth Conference in Canterbury, England, with over 400 Bishops representative of the churches in 100 different countries, there was no Bishop who more fully captured the admiration and esteem than Bishop Tutu. It is our urgent request that Bishop Tutu's passport be restored."

Bishop William A. Jones: "This letter comes in strong concern and protest for the action of the South African government in withdrawing the passport of the Right Reverend Desmond Tutu, a Bishop of the Church of South Africa (Anglican).

"This news from South Africa brings great sorrow and distress to those of us who know Bishop Tutu as a friend and as a leader of the church in Africa. His voice, his witness and influence are badly needed in this troubled, troubled world.

"I pray that the government of South Africa will reconsider their action and allow his passport to be restored."

Bishop Smith: "The action of your government in lifting Bishop Desmond Tutu's passport reveals dramatically to the whole world the oppressive character of your regime, and underscores the already deep suspicions church people in the United States of America entertain about the character of your many and flagrant violations of human dignity and rights.

"I cannot believe God will be long so mocked." (Copy of cable to Prime Minister P. W. Botha of South Africa.)

Bishop Davis: "I wish to protest the action of the South African government in withdrawing the passport of Bishop Desmond Tutu. In witnessing to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to the dignity of every human being, he has done nothing of which anyone of sensitive moral conscience would accuse him. We urge you to reconsider the action, repudiate the injustice and restore to him the dignity and freedom of his office and person." (Copy of letter to Prime Minister P. W. Botha of South Africa.)

Bishop Light: "I have followed with grave concern the actions of the South African Republic against the person of the Right Reverend Desmond Tutu, General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches and former Anglican Bishop of Lesotho. The fact that his free speech regarding opposition to the prison sentence of the Reverend David Russell could result in the removal of Bishop Tutu's passport is frightening instance of what would appear from the outside to be dangerous oppression regarding religious and personal freedom in South Africa. Bishop Tutu is an internationally recognized leader of the Christian Church on the Continent of Africa. As a Bishop in the Episcopal Church I strongly protest this action against an individual and a recognized leader. Such a violation of basic human rights will certainly draw the protest of multitudes."

Bishop Atkinson: "It seems to me that the withdrawal of the passport of Bishop Tutu is uncalled for and a further demonstration of the South African government's sinful stand on racial oppression expressed through apartheid."

Bishop Wallace: "I am writing to protest to you the recent action of the South African Government in withdrawing the passport of Bishop Desmond Tutu.

"Not only is this action a flagrant transgression of human rights from a nation which seeks to convince of their humanitarianism, it also violates the right of a religious leader to make public record of his convictions based on religious ethics.

"I submit that this action is not only unjust, it is unwise to thus impair the ministry of so respected a leader in his selected role as General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches and in the responsibility for which he was consecrated as bishop.

"The world cannot ignore such an invasion of human rights,"

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